



# Astra

Building the Next Generation RAF



'A world-class  
**integrated,  
capable and  
inclusive**

Air Force delivering  
decisive effect  
across all domains.'

The Astra Vision Statement

# Purpose

This narrative aims to help leaders at every level in the Royal Air Force (RAF) Whole Force to hold engaging conversations with their people about Astra. It shouldn't be used as a script, where the words are relayed verbatim – but it's important that the various elements of Astra are communicated clearly and succinctly in language that audiences can understand.

Ideally, the words in this narrative will act as a starting point from which leaders can personalise the story with their experiences, encouraging people to think about what Astra will mean to them.

We don't have all the answers yet to the questions that people might ask – but we will develop the narrative over time to reflect the progress that we make.

# Background

Astra is the name we've chosen for the RAF's journey towards our Next Generation Air Force. It's taken from our Latin motto, *'Per ardua ad astra'* – 'through adversity to the stars,' which defines the character of our first 100 years and anticipates a future where the sky is no longer the limit of our ambitions.

From our noble beginnings as the World's first independent Air Force to our position as the lead UK Service for Air and Space Power, we have continually pushed at the boundaries of technology and human endeavour. Astra represents the next phase in our journey – one that will see us evolve into a Next Generation Air Force that we can all be exceptionally proud of.

Astra is our journey for the next 20 years to meet the challenges and threats of a rapidly changing world, where huge sets of data and information will be the norm. How we use that information to our advantage is fundamental to our continued success.

Astra is built on strong foundations that encompass **People, Training, Infrastructure and Equipment**, focused by conceptual thinking. The delivery of measurable effects against these four elements will be our collective focus over the next 20 years and beyond.

# People

**Our People – the Whole Force – are central to Astra.**  
**Our Next Generation Air Force will feature a diverse, inclusive and empowered workforce that truly reflects the society it serves.**

We must prepare our people to exploit the Information Age, challenge inefficiency and take a proactive role in defining our shared future. To do this, we will empower them to make evidence-based real-time decisions, guided by leadership throughout and world-class data and analytics. We will also develop and grow the capabilities of our RAF space and cyber teams to enable us to support Joint Operations and compete globally.

The adaptability of our Whole Force is one of our greatest strengths. We will exploit this further, through career pathways that encourage individuals to develop different skills and capabilities – within the Service and with industry and academic institutions. At the same time, we will modernise our HR systems to ensure the efficiency of all personnel administration for military and civilian alike.

In return for their commitment and trust, we will develop and enhance the offer, with flexible working, tailored conditions and a package of benefits and rewards that aim to meet individuals' needs, now and in the future.

# Training & Education

An agile, adaptable and capable training and education model is vital if we are to respond to the future needs of the Next Generation Air Force. To achieve this, we will fundamentally change how we train and educate our people to maximise their resilience, flexibility, and effectiveness.

We will reduce our dependency on outdated and inefficient residential-based training and introduce modern and digitally enabled learning packages that recognise prior learning, are competency-based and can be completed at a pace to suit the individual, either at home or at work. We will align our military training with corresponding civilian professional standards, while seeking more opportunities for military and civilian personnel to train and learn together in shared training environments.

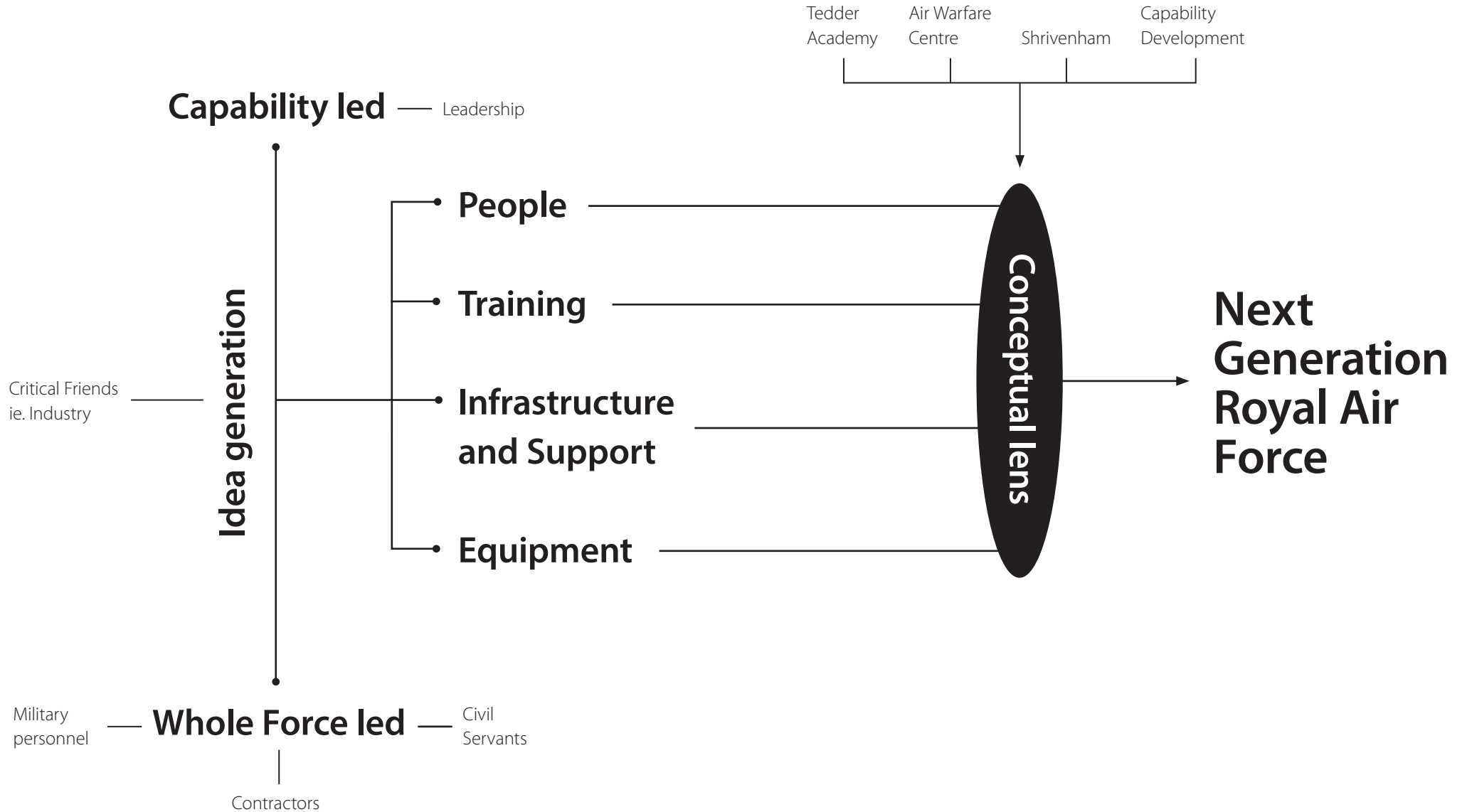
We will deliver a more integrated and intelligent initial training experience through the development of a single gateway to the RAF at Cranwell, rather than the separate training journeys we have today. It will deliver the core skills, behaviours and values that will apply to every member of the Next Generation Air Force, irrespective of how they join the Service.

Increased emphasis on digitisation, synthetic training systems and intelligent data analysis will change the training landscape. This will enable us to grow our front line with highly capable people, who are trained to operate across all environments and able to respond to new and emerging threats.

We will also invest in our professional training staff and ensure that they are supported to deliver the best contemporary training practices, enabled by cutting-edge technology and empowered to develop Next Generation capability through innovative training and education.

# Astra

Building the Next Generation RAF



# Infrastructure & Support

The Next Generation Air Force must live, work and relax in modern environments that are conducive to wellbeing and that support people to deliver their very best work.

The uncomfortable truth is that current reality for many of our people feels very different. Cold showers, intermittent heating and buildings that have changed little since they were built are at odds with Astra.

That's why we are developing short, medium and longer-term plans to address the issues with our infrastructure. Over the next few years the most immediate and pressing concerns – heating and hot water throughout our estate – will be dealt with. At the same time, we will address the worst aspects of our Single Living Accommodation and technical facilities. We will also become more energy efficient.

Our approach to infrastructure will be based on a plan that will ensure money is prioritised for the areas that need it most. Instead of waiting for something to break, we will focus on preventative maintenance to prolong the lifespan of our buildings and equipment through regular servicing and repairs. We will also develop and retain our own homegrown infrastructure specialists to oversee delivery of these improvements across the estate. The way we support our equipment will be at the forefront of our thinking – driving benefit across all aspects of our operations.

In the longer term, we will strive for a carbon neutral infrastructure by making better use of sustainable technologies, enhancing power resilience, reducing our use of fossil fuels and single-use plastic and eliminating all waste from our supply chains.

# Equipment

The Next Generation Air Force will integrate leading-edge equipment to give us the operational edge on a global stage – but it's information and how we use it that's at the heart of our ambition. Networks, digitisation and data will be central to our procurement strategy, joining up our systems to provide maximum integration across all our platforms and every domain.

We will develop interoperable capabilities in the air, space and cyber domains, working closely with the defence industry, other Services and our coalition partners to ensure that we stay ahead of emergent threats.

As the lead UK Service for Space Power, we are responsible for identifying new threats to our space-based capability and protecting the interests of the UK on operations.

To ensure our competitive edge in the rapidly changing world of weaponised information, we will need to think and work very differently. The Next Generation Air Force needs people who can exploit information at pace and with agility to protect our interests. How we work together and, crucially, how we think, will determine our future success.

“We must be  
**technology  
enabled**, not  
equipment  
obsessed.”

Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston CBE ADC

# Leading the Astra way

Astra depends almost entirely on the support and enthusiasm of the Whole Force of Regulars, Reserves, civil servants and contractors. It's an opportunity for us to shape our collective future – but we cannot take the goodwill of our people for granted.

Some of our colleagues will greet Astra with scepticism – we have, after all, made promises about improving our infrastructure before. We must not underestimate the strength of feeling about this – and persuading people that Astra is different requires leaders at every level to engage their people with the vision and win their trust through tangible action. Cascading this narrative via email, leaving a tri-fold in a crew room, hoping that someone reads it, or quoting sections on social media is **not** the right answer – it must be personal.

That's why the RAF's senior leaders will embark on a face-to-face communication campaign from January 2020, which marks the start of an enduring conversation about how we collectively deliver Astra. While there will be some top-down initiatives, this is primarily about creating a dialogue across the entire Force – where ideas and opinions are actively encouraged from all, rather than simply broadcast from the top down.

We will be giving our people opportunities to consider what they do and how they can improve it based on Astra. Our greatest advocates will be the cynics, whose opinions we change through a continuous, compelling story that engages them fully in delivering our Next Generation Air Force.

# Next steps

From early 2020, we will launch a series of activities that will identify and start to deliver tangible achievements to support Astra. The Whole Force will have opportunities to help develop what the Next Generation Air Force will look like in 10, 15 or 20 years from now. Astra initiatives on stations are just as important as the big programmes to improve infrastructure or transform our training offer.

Astra will help us to identify the barriers that hold us back – however big or small – and overcome them by working together, by working smarter and by discarding activity that is no longer relevant. We must be realistic though – and only promise things that we can reasonably expect to deliver.

In the medium and longer terms, each element of Astra – People, Training, Infrastructure and Equipment, will have an associated strategy that looks out to the future and realisation of our Next Generation Air Force. Honest, open communication will be a constant feature of the Astra journey, with regular updates through leaders' briefings, the RAF intranet and other channels.

These are exciting times for the Royal Air Force. In 2018, the UK and our allies across the world joined us to celebrate our centenary – 100 years of astonishing bravery, innovation and operational success. If our first 100 years were *Per Ardua*, our second century is *ad Astra* and we all have an important part to play in shaping our future.



